

TRAINING

The Bench Press Workout Part Two, Assistance Day as told to POWERLIFTING USA by Louie Simmons

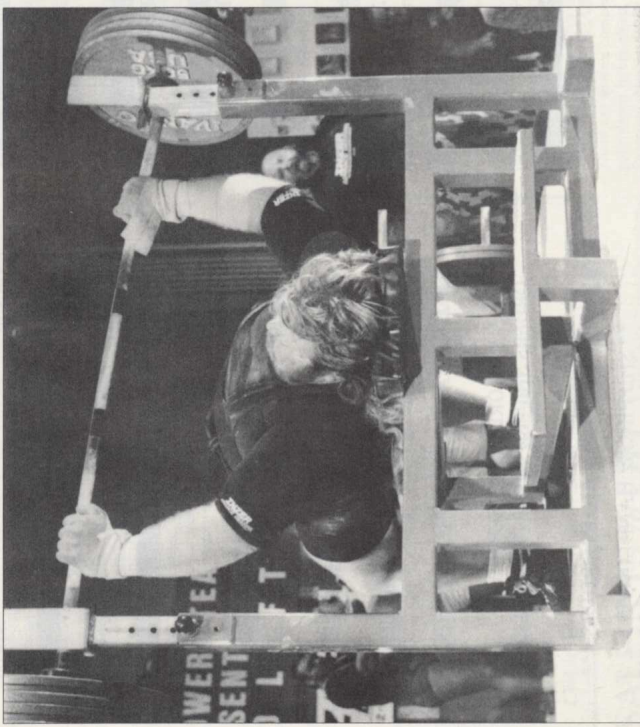
Throughout the year on our assistance bench day, Wednesday, we do a variety of exercises: one or two major pushing exercises and two or three lighter movements, such as lats, shrugs, and hammer curls. For example, power rack benches may start a long revolving cycle. Start with a close grip, and place the pins so that a 2-inch lock-out is possible. Warm up sufficiently, then make large jumps, 90 lbs. if you are a 500+ bench, 50 lbs. if jumps if you bench in the 400s or less. Find a max single. The next week, drop to a 3 inch lock-out. Week 3 a 4 inch lock-out. Week 4 a 5 inch lock-out, and Week 5 a 6 inch lock-out. Our big benches never go lower than 6 inches down for this exercise, at that point their shoulders start to suffer. Remember, we are doing racks for triceps strength, although the anterior delts play a major role as well. Keep track of your record on each pin; this is important. After racks, do quarter dips with weight. We place a box inside our dip bars and only lift our feet 3-6 inches off the box. Keep your feet directly under you. The reps are 3-8. Lock out the triceps hard for a second or two. Don't hyperextend the elbows. Do 3-8 sets. This is followed by some lat work and shrugs for the upper back. Hammer curls and situps and we're

without missing. It takes a week or two to get accustomed to the movement, and by the third week you should be breaking your old PR. Besting your previous PR should go on for one or two more workouts before you start to burn out. Again as you can see, the minicycle only lasts 3-5 weeks. After steep inclines, our triceps work would be quarter dips with weight (3-8 reps) and French press (8-12 reps), then more upper back and lat work. All huge benchers possess a thick upper back. Sometimes we will do side dumbbell raises on Wednesday.

The next minicycle is dumbbells done while lying on the floor. They are done with as heavy dumbbells as possible. The reps are in the 10-20 range. Pause with your elbows on the floor each rep. You will notice that by doing floor presses with dumbbells or a barbell, you are at a leverage disadvantage. That's why we pause then and only then. These are followed by barbell extensions on the floor behind the head, 5-8 reps, and then dumbbell extensions for 8-12 reps. Remember, always try for a record on the presses as well as the extensions whenever possible. Again, follow this with upper back and lat work and hammer curls.

Minicycle 5 is done with one of our favorite exercises, weighted pushups. Place a bar in the bottom of your power rack. Now grab the bar as if to do a press. Our feet are elevated about 1 foot on a box. Have someone place a plate (a 45 or a 100) or have someone sit on your back near your shoulders. They should have their feet in front of your head and be holding onto the rack for balance. Remember to establish a record for reps. I was quite good at pushups with my feet raised. I did 58 with 100 lbs. Gary Sanger's record was 54 reps. Gary was a 198 and I was a 220. This will give you something to shoot for. Larger men won't do quite as well because of their bulk. When Matt Dimel could perform 25 reps, his bench was around 540. Kevin Atkins also did 25 reps with 100 lbs. and could do 550 without a shirt. They weighed about 330 lbs. Remember, with human weight you can set rep records with 150, 200, 250, and even more. With the feet elevated, they simulate incline presses, but all the blood rushes to the chest, arms, and shoulders - what a pump! They can also be done with the feet on the floor. This works the lower chest and the shoulders in a different way. Larry Pacifico did handstand pushups when he was one of the most prominent pressers in the 1970s, 530 at 198 and 570 at 220 without a shirt. In 1972, I witnessed

without a shirt. In 1972, I witnessed



Louie's Methods have produced some excellent bench pressers, including the late, great Matt Dimel

Larry bench 530 at 198 at the Cincinnati open. Eight weeks later, Larry, at 227 (there was no 220-lb class then), he made 590 at a meet in Dayton. As large as his chest was, his triceps did 75% of the press. He also believed that everyone should gain weight, which I do too. Now, back to pushups. They are very taxing. As a rule, if your triceps aren't exhausted, do some extensions. If your shoulders can handle it, do side raises. You will find that your lats do a lot of the work in a pushup, but always do a set or two of pull-downs or rows of some type.

A fellow wrote to me in rebuttal about the lats playing a role in bench pressing. I responded by saying that if you had a set of lats you would change your mind. Minicycle 6 is done with barbell seated press. We press in the power rack off a pin at chin level. There is no use of momentum at all. We, again, use a variety of grips, from very close to 32 inches apart. Keep a record of the amount of weight you do and grip you used. These seated presses are again done for a max single. Then change grips from wide to close or close to wide for a few sets of high reps to hit whichever delt was missed with the previous grip. Then do side raises, triceps extensions (you pick the type), some shrugs or lat work, and ham-

mer curls. Remember, shrugs are important to keep the shoulders in good shape. I hoped you have noticed that we only do one or two major exercises, followed by only two or three direct work exercises, such as one of a variety of triceps extensions, a side delt exercise, and upper back and forearm work. I am often asked how Kenny Patterson benches over 500 in the 220s while training with only 325. Well, being able to lock out 805 with a close grip in a 2-inch press in the rack helps. I hope this description of our workouts will answer your questions. You can add your favorite exercises to the list. Rotate the exercises every 3 or 4 weeks. You won't burn out with this system. Over a dozen of my lifters have bench pressed 500 lbs or more, yet many can't make Westside Barbell's all-time top 10 bench by the Schwartz formula, including Matt Dimel's 575.

A tip on bench shirts: If you don't have strong arms, a shirt won't help much. Normally, the most resistant shirt is the best. We only use a shirt at meets, and we do a meet every 8 weeks without burning out. You can too!

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Louie Simmons presents the REVERSE HYPER machine patent pending June 9, 1993, #73-544

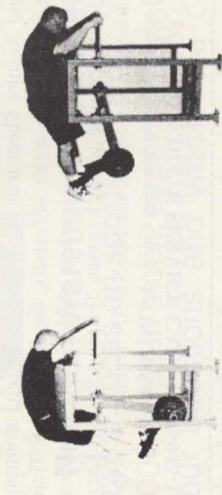
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